

# Precinct Reporter

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## Proposed Cuts to WAP Bad for State Poor

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Sizzling summer is over, and if the old almanac logic that hotter summers mean colder winters is correct, watch out energy bills.

Despite record high temperatures this year, the Bush Administration wants to cut weatherization funding for low-income homes by 30 percent for 2007, with the toughest cut to warmer states.

Patricia Nickols, director of San Bernardino County's Community Action Partnership, said any cut for local struggling families will be hard enough, and every penny counts. If the U.S. Department of Energy's Weatherization Assistance Program (WAP) funding is knocked down, she won't be able to meet the level of local low income need.

Although the Weatherization Assistance Program is smaller compared to some of her other programs at the San Bernardino Community Action Partnership, she said all of the programs work in unison.

"We operate multiple weatherization programs. This is a smaller program in terms of funding compared to some of the other programs that we operate," she said. "Out of the 120 homes we weatherize, it would be a reduction of about 48 homes."

San Bernardino CAP reports that it helped lower annual energy bills by up to 30 percent for 600 qualified homes through the WAP program, which in turn has freed up a little more money each year for qualified families to put toward other necessities.

The National Community Action Foundation estimates that WAP helps individual families save about \$274 a year in energy bills, and that money is usually applied toward food, rent or medicine.

William Warren, program man-

## SB Proposed Cuts

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ager for the energy, education and environmental services, said that the local weatherization program receives roughly \$330,000, and will be negatively impacted by whatever percentage legislature agrees the final cut will be.

"We have a lot of different utility and other weatherization contracts, we could make up for the loss, but you have to look at the national picture," he said.

"One of the biggest things is the impact it would have on low-income families. With the money that they could potentially save with the weatherization program, now they'll have to take that money from other areas to apply it to their energy bill," he said.

Last summer saw record high temperatures nationwide and bigger energy bills than ever before.

Nationally, the Senate proposes to cut 16 percent from the \$242 million WAP program giving states a 16 percent cut on average, but steeper reductions are aimed at warm states, and California is looking at a 21 percent reduction over the last funding cycle. The House-proposed WAP allocation for California is 36 percent more than the Senate side for 2007.

On the horizon, the Weatherization Assistance Program cuts could hurt about 100,000 households nationwide.

Laura Monchuk, spokesperson for the National Community Action Foundation, said if the bill passes, it will pose a significant threat, especially to several warmer states that face the deepest cutbacks.

The House recently rejected weatherization cuts and approved a

\$12 million increase for the program for next year, but the proposed cuts for the national weatherization program is awaiting a Senate vote mid-November after the general election, Monchuk said.

"If the cuts are approved, many of the local community action agencies will be forced with having to turn away consumers in need of weatherization improvements next year. It will hurt communities nationwide," she said.

Local CAP chairman Al Twine said that the program is equally important in the long run because energy efficiency makes sense. It reduces the overall national consumption, which is another key to keeping energy prices down.

"When the bill comes before the full Senate, we urge Senators Barbara Boxer and Diane Feinstein to reject these proposed cuts and to provide at least the current funding level for this effective program," Twine said.

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